



Vieques Island, Puerto Rico

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Response and Restoration (OR&R) works with federal and local partners to assist in the cleanup, restoration, and protection of Vieques coastal and marine resources.

In 2003, the US Navy ceased military operations on Vieques and is now investigating areas it previously occupied to determine the extent of potential contamination.

In fiscal years 2005 and 2006, NOAA received appropriations from Congress to assist the Departments of Defense and Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency in carrying out their responsibilities in cleaning up Vieques, Puerto Rico. In collaboration with federal and commonwealth partners and the Vieques community, NOAA has begun working on the following projects.



Land and Fiddler Crab Study

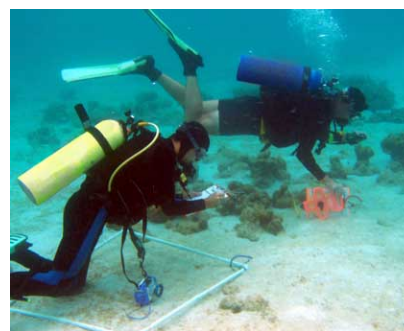
NOAA conducted an investigation to characterize chemical concentrations of hazardous substances in land and fiddler crabs on Vieques. Land crabs are a popular food resource for Vieques residents. The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry concluded



that eating land crabs on Vieques does not pose a human health risk. The results will assist the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) determine whether refuge areas can be opened to harvesting of land crabs. The data may also be used as part of the cleanup investigation. NOAA's Land and Fiddler Crab Sampling Report is located at: <http://response.restoration.noaa.gov>

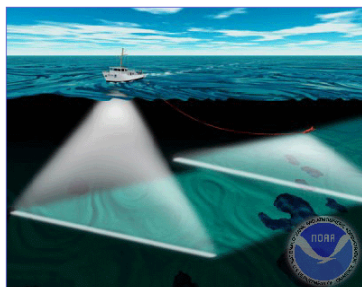
Coral Reef Ecosystem Characterization

NOAA will conduct a broad-scale characterization of Vieques' coral reef ecosystems. In collaboration with our partners, NOAA will collect detailed information on benthic habitats, fish and invertebrate communities, and water quality from approximately 70 sites around Vieques. This study will provide baseline data to determine the health of the coral reef ecosystems in Vieques. The data will help develop a strategy for long-term monitoring of Vieques' coral reef ecosystems that will support the cleanup and long-term protection of the resources.



Hydrographic Survey

NOAA is planning a hydrographic survey to demonstrate the effectiveness of side scan and multi-beam sonar and video mosaic in identifying



ordnance and debris in the waters around Vieques. This demonstration project will help the Navy characterize the ordnance and debris, and the potential impacts to

the marine environment. This survey will also help guide future hydrographic surveys, and assist with cleanup and restoration efforts.

Education and Outreach

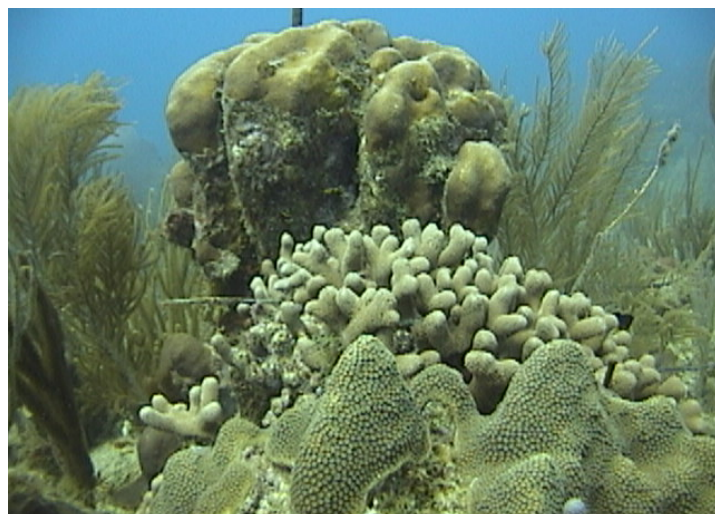
NOAA is working with the Vieques Conservation and Historic Trust (Trust) to increase public awareness of the coastal and marine resources in Vieques. With NOAA's support, the Trust is developing interactive and bilingual educational exhibits and materials, including a Marine Life exhibit, a Bioluminescent Bay exhibit, and educational materials on Vieques coastal and marine resources.

Fishery and Habitat Linkage Assessment

The NOAA research vessel *Nancy Foster* will conduct a study at Ensenada Honda and Mosquito Bay in Vieques to examine fish community structure. The study will help understand the connection between species and habitat, and identify what habitats are of most value for fisheries in Vieques. These data will assist in prioritizing conservation efforts, support the development of a sustainable fishery resource, and assist with



the cleanup and restoration.



Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Mapping Project

NOAA is compiling spatial data for Vieques, including sensitive species, benthic habitat, nautical charts, and site-specific investigation chemical data. The site is developed in ARCVIEW and ArcIMS, which is a web-based application that is easily accessible by the public. The GIS mapping project will assist in the cleanup, restoration, and protection of Vieques' coastal resources, and provide an education tool for the community.

Environmental Sensitivity Index Map Update

NOAA is updating the Environmental Sensitivity Index Maps (ESI) for Vieques to include new data from the USFWS and other partners, such as turtle nesting areas. The updated ESI's will assist the USFWS's effort to protect and manage the natural resources of Vieques, and assist the Navy with the cleanup.



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